

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

D U B L I N,

JULY 15th, 1714.

By N. W E L D.

W I T H A
Recommendatory P R E F A C E,

By the Reverend

Mr. *John Shower.*

Mr. *J. Boyse.*

Mr. *W. Tong.*

L O N D O N,

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THE PARLIAMENT

OF GREAT BRITAIN

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T O T H E R E A D E R.

HAVING perused this excellent Sermon, preach'd at *Dublin* the 15th of *July* last, with a particular Reference to the late Schism-Bill being's extended to *Ireland*, we do heartily recommend it to the Reader. He will find therein such a noble Strain of truly Christian Charity, as ought to convince all those that bear an Ill-will to Protestant Dissenters, how little they deserve any such Treatment from 'em. The latter Part of the Discourse seems almost propheticall, and ought to remind us, how remarkably God has heard the ardent Prayers of all good Protestants, by the peaceable Accession of His present Majesty to the Throne, to the common Joy of all His loyal Subjects, and the Disappointment of all our Enemies at home and abroad, that look on it with an envious Eye. But tho' this eminent Mercy suggests to us just Ground of Praise for so seasonable a Deliverance from our Fears; yet it should by no Means supersede our continued Prayers, That His present Majesty's Throne may be establish'd in Righteousness; and that the promoting a nearer Union of all good Protestants, in Affection as well as Interest, may be the Glory of His auspicious Reign.

John Shower.
J. Boyse.
W. Tong.

THE PREFACE

TO THE
Dublin Edition.

THE Author preach'd the following Sermon in his ordinary Course, without the least Thought of making it more publick; but several who heard it, expressing themselves pleas'd with the charitable and serious Temper it was design'd to recommend, Importun'd him to print it. 'Tis his paying a greater Deference to their Judgment than his own, that determin'd him to comply.

And if the Seasonableness of the Subject may compensate for the Meanness of the Performance, and it be instrumental for doing any Good, he will not be solicitous about exposing his own Reputation in a critical and captious Age.

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at

D U B L I N, &c.

JEREMIAH xviii. 20.

Shall Evil be recompensed for Good? For they have digged a Pit for my Soul: Remember that I stood before thee to speak Good for them, and to turn away thy Wrath from them.

THIS Holy Prophet liv'd in very discouraging Times, when the *Jewish* Church had degenerated to an astonishing Degree; (a) they stand charg'd with Idolatry in Worship, and (which is a common Attendant on that) with much Profaneness in their Practice: The Declension seems almost Universal. All sorts of Men infected. The very Priesthood was not free: *Their Watch-men are represented blind, compared to dumb Dogs that could not bark, (to give warning when danger was approaching) sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber; yea, they are likened to greedy Dogs that could never have enough: Looking every one for his Gain from his Quarter. They abused their Plenty to Luxury and Intemperance, Come (say they) and we will fetch Wine, and fill our selves with strong Drink, and to*

a) Isa. 56. 10, 11, 12.

Morrow shall be as this Day, and much more abundant. They seem abandon'd to Sloth, Covetousness, and Sensuality: And while it was thus with *them*, and the *Fountain* was so poisoned, no wonder that from the (a) *Prophet and the Priest, Prophaneness shou'd go forth through the Land.*

In this sinful State they were ripening themselves apace for the strokes of Penal Wrath; the Decree was even bringing forth, and a black Tempest ready to break upon their Heads; and this Prophet was sent to give them warning of it, which he does with much Faithfulness and Zeal, earnestly inviting them to Repentance, as the only Expedient to prevent their Ruin. He had a Commission to pronounce these awful Words to the Men of Judah and Jerusalem; (b) *Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a Device against you: Return ye now every one from his evil Way, and make your Ways and your Doings good.*

But they not only despised his Message, but were enraged against his Person for it, tho' he spake to them in the Name of the Lord: (c) *Come, (say they) and let us devise Devices against Jeremiah.* They seem to use this Language in a prophane and scoffing Frame. And to turn his *Cant*, as they esteemed it, upon himself. *q. d.* He tells us of God's devising Devices against us, let us devise Devices against him, and see which will be more effectual: For notwithstanding all his Threatnings, (d) *The Law shall not perish from the Priest, nor Counsel from the Wise, nor the Word from the Prophet.* Their great Cry and Boast was, *The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these*; as tho' they were the Men, and Wisdom shou'd dye with them, and Safety was insur'd to them. In this Confidence they proceed to add to their other Abominations the Guilt of Persecution: *Come, and let us smite him with* (or as it may

(a) Jer. 23. 15.

(b) Jer. 18. 11. (c) 18.

(d) Jer. 18. 18.

be rendred, for) *his Tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his Words.*

This unworthy and disingenuous Treatment from Men, puts the Prophet upon bringing his Cause before God : At his Foot-stool he breaks forth into this warm but just Expostulation in my Text, *Shall Evil be recompensed for Good? For they have digged a Pit for my Soul.* They reproach'd his Person, every one of them did curse him ; they conspir'd his Ruin, accused him as dangerous and disloyal to the Government, designing to fall away to the *Chaldeans*, and promote their Interests. Under that Umbrage they deprived him of his Liberty, and threatned his Life : But did they not herein recompence Evil for Good? Had he deserved this Usage at their Hands? Was this the Reward of his Faithfulness towards them, and solicitous Endeavours for their Good, for which he makes here a solemn Appeal to God? Remember that instead of doing any thing that might justly expose me to their Indignation, *I stood before thee to speak Good for them, and to turn away thy Wrath from them.* And his Practice herein is the Pattern I design to recommend to your Imitation.

In order whereto I shall endeavour to shew you,

1. *That good Men may sometimes be hardly used by the People among whom they live.*

2. *That it shou'd be the Practice of good Men under such Circumstances, to stand before the Lord, and to speak good for those that use them ill ; and to contribute all that is in their Power to turn away the Wrath of God from them when they are threatned with it.*

3. *That this Practice is agreeable to the Precepts of the Christian Religion, and the shining Patterns it sets before us.*

And, 4. *I shall proceed to some suitable Application of these Words to our Case.*

1. *Good Men may sometimes be hardly used and ill treated by the People among whom they live.*

I shall

I shall not insist long on the Illustration of this Proposition : Nor need it be any great Matter of Wonder, while Men that are (a) *good* dwell in a World that is so *evil*, that *lies in Wickedness*. The Seed of the Serpent will express their Malignity against serious Piety ; and (b) *they that are born after the Flesh persecute them that are born after the Spirit*. The Apostle tells us it has been so in all Generations. Exemplary Holiness condemns an ungodly World ; and because it condemns them, it provokes them : And therefore they that will *live godly in Christ Jesus*, must lay their Account for it, that in one kind or other they *shall suffer Persecution*. They dwell in a World that hates them, and must expect to be us'd accordingly.

But besides the Exercises good Men may meet with from the World of the Ungodly, they may sometimes suffer Hardship even from their Brethren. (c) *Their Mother's Children* (which is the more grievous and wounding) *may be angry with them*. I shall mention one Instance hereof ; which, tho' it agrees not with *Jeremy's* Circumstances, may be applicable to our own.

They *that hold the Head* may go into different Sentiments about the Matters of Religious Worship and Government. Nor shou'd we think it strange they do so, since the Minds of Men are not of the same size any more than their Bodies. While our Light is imperfect, there will be a Difference in our Apprehensions ; there was so from the very Beginning of Christianity. The *Jewish* Converts were zealous for retaining the *Jewish* Rites ; whereas the Apostle *Paul*, who had a greater Measure of Gospel Light, preach'd up Christian Liberty, and Freedom from that Yoke of Bondage among the *Gentile* Churches. This rais'd him many Enemies among the unbelieving *Jews*, who conspir'd and vow'd his Death, and in their Rage and Fury were ready to tear him in Pieces : Yea, even

(a) 1 John 5. 19. (b) Gal. 4. 29. (c) Sol. Song. 1. 6.

the converted *Jews* seem to have been deeply prejudic'd against him on this account. The other Apostles tell him, (a) what Apprehensions they had entertain'd concerning him ; and that upon hearing he was come to *Jerusalem*, they cou'd not be with-held from coming together, and seem'd afraid of the Consequences. Now in such Cases the excellent pacifick Rules of the Gospel requirē a mutual Forbearance, with the Continuance of a mutual Charity and Love ; (b) *That he that eateth shou'd not despise him that eateth not*, and so on the contrary, that (c) *when one esteemed one Day above another, and another esteem'd every Day alike, every one in these Cases shou'd labour to be fully perswaded in his own Mind*, and so be left to practise peaceably accordingly to his Perswasion : And if we did thus bear with one another in Love, what hurt cou'd different Opinions and Practices in the lesser Matters of Religion do in the Church ?

But when Terms of Christian Communion are made narrower than our Lord Jesus Christ has left 'em, when one side will obtrude and impose their own Apprehensions as a Rule to the other, and the other side dare not comply for fear of Sinning, this divides : And when a Rent is unhappily made, how prone are those that are the strongest to bear hard on those that are under them, to reproach their Persons as Schismatics, and their Ministrations as Nullities ; to charge 'em with being under the Influence of Stubbornness, Pride or Party-Zeal ; to exclude 'em from the Civil Advantages of Life, and restrain 'em in Instances, that do sensibly affect them and their Posterity.

In such Cases what should a crushed despised Party do ? If they comply, Conscience is wounded. If they refuse, their Temporal Interests are ruined.

Yet this latter they must chuse rather than *sin*, which they really fear they should do by a Compliance,

(a) Acts 21.

(b) Rom. 14. 3.

(c) ver. 5.

and that after the best Inquiries they can make, wherein 'tis less probable they should be swayed by Partiality to the self-denying Side.

Thus good Men may suffer hard Things from their Brethren : But with what Temper of Spirit towards those they differ from, and suffer by, we may partly learn from the Example of this holy Prophet. They must not be heated up into passionate Resentments, and be set on Fire for Retaliation and Revenge ; they must not say we will do to them as they have done to us, but study in a Christ-like Frame to repay Evil with Good ; bless and not curse, and so heap Coals of Fire on the Head of those who will be Enemies to them, and (as they think) without a Cause. But this leads me to the next Head,

2dly, *That it should be the Practice of good Men under such Circumstances, to stand before the Lord, and speak good for those that use them ill ; and to contribute all that is in their Power to turn away the Wrath of God from them when they are threatned with it.* Let us briefly consider this Proposition in its Parts.

1. *Good Men under such Circumstances should stand before the Lord, i. e.* They should be much with God, cry mightily to him, abound in the Duty of Prayer.

There were two Things in the Prophe's Case which, when they concur in ours, do oblige us to be thus employed.

1. *Unkind Treatment from Men.* (a) *Let us not give heed to any of his Words* (say this scornful People with sufficient Contempt of his Person and Work). But then, *Give heed to me, O Lord* (says the Prophet). Thus when the Psalmist had to do (b) *with Men that compassed him about with Words of Hatred, and fought against him without a Cause, I* (says he) *give my self to Prayer.* If our Fellow-Creatures, if our Fellow-Christian prove unkind, whither should we seek, where can we

(a) Jer. 18. 18, 19.

(b) Psal. 109. 3. 4.

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find Relief but in God ? When our Friends scorn us, (such as should not do so) our Eyes should pour out Tears to God ; his compassionate Ears will be open, when their Hearts are shut, and (a) *he will regard our Affliction when he hears our Cry* : To him we should humbly seek for those Assistances, that may enable us to carry well under such Exercises, that our Troubles may make us better, and we learn to *possess our Souls in Patience, committing our Cause to him that judges righteously*. From his Indulgence and Mercy we may hope, that when the World frowns he will smile, and vouchsafe those Tokens of his Presence in our despis'd Ministrations, that are infinitely better than the greatest Kindness and Countenance of Men. When the Psalmist became a Reproach, this is the Relief he seeks, and we should do so too, (b) *Let them curse, but bless thou* ; q. d. If thou be but pleased with me, and make me to know I have found Grace in thy Sight, it will be enough, what Entertainment soever I meet with among Men.

2. *Threatnings of national Judgments from God*. When the holy God is arising out of his Place to plead a Controversy with any People, so that they are passing apace out of a probationary State, and penal Wrath ready to overwhelm them, this is a solemn Season for Prayer, and abounding in it. When a sore Tempest is ready to break upon us, should not every Man arise and call upon his God ? The Light of Nature directed the Ninevites to be thus employ'd, under the Threatning of (c) *Jonah* ; such Regard was paid to his Message, that a Commandment comes from the Throne, that Man and Beast should be covered with Sackcloth, and that they should cry mightily to God. My Brethren, God's Controversies with Nations are awful Things ; for who can stand when he is angry ? If he does but touch the Mountains, they smoke ;

(a) Psal. 106. 44.

(b) ver. 28.

(c) Jon. 3. 7, 8.

or the Earth, it trembles. And therefore, when his Sword is brandished over our Heads, how well does it become us to fall prostrate at his Foot? It wou'd look like a presumptuous hardned Frame, that we do not *regard the Work of the Lord, nor consider the Operation of his Hand*; or that we make a light Thing of his Anger, when threatned Troubles and Dangers do not awaken us to Prayer. Lord (says the Prophet) *(a) in trouble they visited thee, they poured out a Prayer when thy chastening was upon them*; and sure we must be under a strangely stupid Frame if we do not.

2dly, *When good Men stand before the Lord* in the Posture of Supplicants, what shou'd they say? Must they speak ill of those that use them so? Must they make Intercession against Israel as *Elias* did? Must they joyn in such an awful Imprecation as follows my Text? *(b)* surely they must not. We conceive the Prophet therein, to be under an extraordinary Impulse of a Spirit of Prophecy, which we cannot pretend to, and therefore must not imitate, but rather study to conform our selves to the ordinary known Rules of Duty: And therefore,

We must speak Good for those among whom we are hardly used. We are not indeed oblig'd to speak well of them, in those Instances wherein we fear they do ill. Charity must not be stretch'd to affront Conscience or Truth. But yet when we cannot speak well of them, we may, we shou'd, speak good for them, by importunate and fervent Intercessions with God. We shou'd interpose as far as we can signify any thing, to avert National Judgments, and turn away Wrath. It shou'd not satisfy good Men, that they endeavour to secure themselves, by getting into good Terms with God, and so providing an hiding Place in his Promise and Covenant, when they see a Storm coming (tho' this shou'd be their first Care.) But an affectionate Con-

(a) Isa. 26. 16.

(b) Jer. 18. 21, &c.

cern for the Publick shou'd excite them to implore Mercy for others, and to deprecate National Calamities and Desolations. *For Zion's sake they should not hold their peace, and for Jerusalem's sake they shou'd not be silent.* They shou'd have the Publick Safety more at Heart, than any Temporal Interest of their own, and generously forget how they have been treated by those, whose Cause they plead before God.

This Prophet had a Promise of peculiar Protection for himself and his Remnant; thus had God said to him, (a) *Verily it shall be well with thy Remnant; Verily I will cause the Enemy to intreat thee well in the time of Evil.* Yet this was not enough for him; how earnestly does he solicit for a Blessing on the People among whom he lived? He speaks Good for them, and wou'd fain have been Instrumental to obtain Mercy for them; and we shou'd go and do likewise.

3. *I proceed to shew you, That this Practice is agreeable to the Precepts of the Gospel, and the Excellent Pattern it sets before us.*

How expressly and emphatically is this Duty prescribed by our Blessed Lord? *Ye have heard* (says he) *it has been said,* (b) *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy.* The former is a Branch of the Divine Law: The latter is a corrupt Addition of the Scribes and Pharisees; probably it was a Part of the Oral Tradition they so much boasted of: But thus our Saviour condemns it, (c) *But I say unto you, Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.* Divine Words! How well do they become the Sacred Mouth that utter'd them! The Duties they recommend, are the most truly Great and Generous that can be and the most perfective of our Nature. 'Tis by Obedience to such Directions that Man becomes most like to God: For so it

(a) Jer. 15. 11.

(b) Matth. 5. 43.

(c) 44.

follows,

follows, (a) *That you may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, (do like him) for he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and Good, and his Rain to fall on the Just and Unjust.*

To do Good for Good, is Human ; the worst of Men may do so : But to do Good for Evil, this is Divine. This is a Strain of Heroical Vertue, which the Heathen World was very much a Stranger to. If we consult their Moralists, some of the most Celebrated of them are miserably defective here. Forgiving Injuries is with them Degenerous and Servile ; they seem to patronize Pride and Revenge, as a becoming Greatness of Mind. But *we have not so learned Christ.* This is the Excellency of the Christian Religion, that it directs us in our private Capacity to seek the Good of those that desire our Harm. And indeed it carries the Principles of Charity, Love, and Self-denial to a Noble Height, and bears on it Bright and Amicable Impressions of that Divine and Perfect Goodness from which it flows.

This Practice is recommended by the *Patterns* as well as *Precepts* of the Gospel. I hinted before with what Malice and Violence the *Jews* pursued the Apostle *Paul* ; but is he provoked by their Bitterness and implacable Cruelty, to render Evil for Evil ? No, but on the contrary, his Desires of their Salvation were so ardent, that with a transport of Love to them, (b) *he could have wish'd himself accursed from Christ, for his Brethren, his Kinsmen, according to the Flesh.* I might mention *Moses* under the Old Testament ; tho' many Sights were put upon him by that unthankful People, yet how affectionately and importunately does he interpose with God to prevent their Ruin ?

But the Glorious Example of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, supersedes the Necessity of enlarging on any others. He came to seek the Good of our Nature,

(a) 45.

(b) Rom. 9. 3.

and invariably pursu'd the kind Design, in the midst of the most ungrateful Usage, enduring the Contradiction of Sinners against himself; when he was reviled, reviling not again; when he suffered, threatening not. What Love but *his* would not have been wearied out by so many ungrateful Returns, and have desisted from his merciful Undertaking? But he went about doing Good for Evil, in the whole Course of his humbled Life, and has consecrated and recommended his excellent Precepts of Love by his own Example, with his dying Breath: *Father forgive them*, (says a compassionate Redeemer concerning those that imbrued their Hands in his Blood) *they know not what they do*.

I shall only add, Since a Principle of Grace is the Law of God written on the Heart of Man, there are some Noble, Generous Habitues and Dispositions of this Kind in the Breast of every real Christian, inclining him, tho' in a more imperfect Degree, to do Good for Evil, while Flesh and Blood may remonstrate powerfully against it, and too often prevail.

I proceed now in the last Place, to apply these Truths to our own Case, and I shall insist on no other Use, but an Exhortation to the Duties here recommended.

Let us (my Brethren) stand before the Lord to speak Good for our People, and the Cities of our God, and contribute what we can in our narrow Sphere to turn away Wrath.

We that are *Dissenters* have our peculiar Burthens and Pressures, under which we labour and groan. The Nations are apprehended to be in Danger from a common Foe.

None of you are insensible of the Design of a *Papish Pretender*, supported by the Power of *France*, encouraged by many among our selves, that are ready to abett his Interests, and embrace him with open Arms. Fatal Animosities are diffused among us, and grown up to an amazing height: Our Hearts are divided;

vided; Divisions beget a mutual Distrust, in a Day wherein the firmest Union and Confidence in one another wou'd be requisite for a successful Defence. For these Divisions of *Reuben*, there may be great *Thoughts of Heart*, for they at once render us the *Sport* of our Enemies, and raise their *Hopes*. On all these Accounts added to our abounding Sinfulness, all Things are filled with Tokens of Divine Wrath; we look like a People ready to be thrown into dreadful Confusions.

Now in such a Day as this, *shall we altogether hold our peace?* Shall Resentments against Men take us off from addressing to God? Shall a peevish, froward Impatience, under our own Difficulties, make us suddenly indifferent, whether the Nations be saved or perish? Or shall a wordly Frame, and a Spirit of Slumber indispose us for the Duty of Prayer? God forbid, that this shou'd be our Frame under our present Circumstances. I shall offer two Considerations, that represent the *Sinfulness* and *Danger* of it, as Disswasives from it.

1. *Neglects of this Duty will be provoking to God.* A prayerless Frame is very displeasing to him, because it is an ungrateful Contempt of all his condescending Goodness, by which he does encourage his People to an Intercourse with himself: He has set up a Mercy-Seat in Heaven, that it may be the Place of our delightful Resort: He has constituted his own Son a compassionate and prevailing Mediator there, that his Greatness might not over-whelm us, nor his Terrors make us afraid: He has promised the Assistance of his Holy Spirit to a Praying People, to guide their Thoughts, and raise their Affections: He has assured them of a Gracious Audience; that his Ear shall be open to their Cries; that they shall be heard as often as they pray in Sincerity; that they shall never ask in vain, when they ask in Faith: And after all this rich Grace on his Part, shall there be a backward Heart on ours? How ungrateful wou'd this be in us, how provoking to him?

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Neglects of Speaking Good for our Lands will be also a further Provocation, when he threatens to visit them in Wrath. For such Neglects betray a Contempt of his Anger, as tho' we did not much lay it to Heart, and paid but little Regard to his Authority, in complying with the Methods he prescribes for turning it away.

In the Prophet (a) *Isaiah's* Time, it was a Day of Trouble, treading down, and Perplexity from the Lord God of Hosts in the Valley of *Vision*. It was not long before he utter'd these Words, that (b) *Syria* was Confederate with *Ephraim*, to advance the Interests of a Young Pretender, and to force a King upon *Judah*, even the Son of *Tabeal*.

And that Storm was scarce blown over, when a new one was threatned. (c) *Now in that Day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and mourning, and girding with Sack-cloth, i. e. to enlarged Prayer in the Exercises of Solemn Repentance.* But that sinful People were so far from complying with the Divine Call, that on the contrary they abandon themselves to Security, and indulge a sensual Frame; (d) *Behold Joy and Gladness, eating Flesh, and drinking Wine, &c.* And you may see how this Disobedience was resented by the Holy God. (e) *It was revealed in mine Ears by the Lord God of Hosts; Surely this Iniquity shall not be purged from you till you dye.* This Guilt was sealed up among his Treasures, till it brought down Ruin and Death upon them, and God wou'd not pardon it.

2dly, *Neglects of Prayer under Threatnings of Wrath will make our Case look desperate; For how can we expect that God shou'd have an Arm to save, when we have not an Heart to ask? Commonly a praying Frame introduces great Blessings to a People; when God promises that he will remember their Land, with Favour, (a) yet for this he will be enquired of by the House*

(a) *Isa.* 22. 5.(b) *Isa.* 7. 6.

(c) 12.

(d) 13.

(e) 14.

(a) *Ezek.* 36. 37.

of Israel to do it for them. I can remember, and do it with delight, that before the late Happy Revolution, when we groaned under a Popish Yoke, besides all the Supplications that were made more publickly, Knots of private Christians wou'd weekly get together, and spend whole Days in mighty Wrestlings with God; a Spirit of Prayer was awakened, and the Success was answerable. He that prepared their Heart to ask, made ready his Ear to hear. O that many Hearts among us were now disposed to be so employed! My Brethren, 'tis a dreadful state of things that is described by the Prophet (b) *Ezekiel*, when that Land was full of Sin, and all sorts of Men invaded by it; Princes, Prophets, Priests, and People unclean; *I sought for a Man among them to stand in the Gap, and make up the Hedge before me for the Land, that I shou'd not destroy it, but I found none*: Holy Persons may by fervent Prayer make a noble Stand against a Torrent of Wrath when it is breaking in. Till the Case of a People be desperate, and the Decree gone forth, this Expedient wou'd not fail.

But when Pleaders and Wrestlers with God are not to be found among a People, what is the Issue? It follows, *I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine Indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the Fire of my Wrath, their own way have I recompensed upon their Heads, saith the Lord God*. Let such Considerations awaken our Consciences, that every one in their Places may do somewhat toward delivering our Lands. Shall I mention a few Instances, wherein we may cast in our Mite.

1. *By Fervent Supplications, both Publick and Secret*. O let every one of us stand up before the Lord, and speak Good for our Lands to him: Let us fill our Mouths with Arguments, and order our Cause before him.

(b) *Ezek. 22. 30, 31.*

But what Good can we speak for them that are so Evil, so full of Sins, so impenitent in it?

I confess, this makes our Case look very discouraging. O Sin, Sin is the dead Weight. It sinks our Hopes, and almost stops our Mouths, in pleading the Case of our guilty Lands before God: On the account of it, God may righteously expostulate with us, *Shall I not visit for these things, and my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* But yet there may be some hope in *Israel* concerning this thing, Faith may find some Arguments to urge in our Case,

1. *The Mercies of our God are great, and like his Being, Infinite:* And Mercy does sometimes exert its self in a way of Sovereignty, and transcendent Prerogative, to rescue a guilty People, that are ready, that are worthy to perish.

The ordinary Method wherein Mercy proceeds, is first to recover a People to Repentance, and then to command Deliverance. And in this way of Proceeding, our Hopes may be brought very low: For alas, 'tis too visible that we are yet an impenitent People. But there are some reserv'd Cases, some Instances of the Triumphs of Sovereign Grace: God can, if he pleases, first save, and then turn us, and so by his Goodness lead us to Repentance. He seems to intimate such a thing, when he tells us (a) *that in Mount Zion there shall be Deliverance, and there shall be Holiness:* Where *Deliverance* comes first, and *Holiness* after; or Mercy can yet longer reprieve our sinful Lands, and make the Day of his Patience, the Season for our Repentance. We address to a Being, that is Sovereign in his Grace, and Sovereign Grace can outdo our Hopes; yea, and go beyond his own Promise: With what great Expectations shou'd we bow our Knee to such a God!

2dly, *Tbo' the Nations may seem very Remote from a*

(a) Obad. 17.

general Repentance; yet how easily, how soon can he dispose them to it; His Grace works with an Omnipotent Efficacy, that finds nothing hard, that makes the Blind to see, and the Dead to live; that can make a Nation to be born in a Day, and can of Stones raise up Children to Abraham. There are Seasons spoken of under the New Testament Dispensation, wherein a plenteous Effusion of the Holy Spirit is promised, that can soon turn a barren Wilderness into a fruitful Field; so that the Church, as surprised with numerous Converts, may cry out, *Who hath begotten me these!* (a) Behold, I was left alone, *These, where have they been?* O if we could prevail for such an happy Dispensation in our Days, that the Spirit from on High may be poured forth among us, what a Glorious Change would it suddenly produce, to bring back wandering Sinners to God, to reconcile our divided Hearts to one another, so that the Face of our Earth may be renewed again?

3dly, *We may encourage our selves to speak Good for our Lands before God, because of the Relation we stand in to him, that he has pleased to take us to be his People.* His Truth is in our Hands, the Symbols of his Sacred Presence are among us in his House; and tho' we have carried our selves so ill to him, that we deserve he should give us a Bill of Divorce, yet he has not done it hitherto. And may we not humbly plead before him, as *Jeremy* does. (b) *Why shouldest thou be as a Man astonished, as a mighty Man that cannot save?* Yet, *O Lord, thou art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy Name, leave us not.*

4thly, *We may encourage our selves in speaking Good for our Lands before God, from the great Things he has already done for us.* How marvellously has he interposed for us, when we were unworthy of his Favour! And what Divine Mercy has done already, it can do again, for his Arm is not shortned that it cannot save:

(a) Isa. 49. 21.

(b) Jer. 14. 9.

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I need lead your Thoughts no farther back than to the late Glorious Revolution, when a *Popish* Prince was actually on the Throne, bigotted to that monstrous Religion, inclinable enough to embrace and hearken to any Counsels that might promote it, our Enemies then thought the Day was their own for ever. How were *Popery* and Slavery breaking in like a Floud ! The Fence of Laws was broken through, Liberty and Property gone : *You shall know I am your King, and will be obeyed*, was the imperious Language of those Days. And indeed the Nations were reduc'd to the last Despair, and at the Brink of Ruin. Our holy Religion was like *Isaac*, bound on the Altar, and ready to be made a Sacrifice, and we with it, when an Hand from Heaven interposed ; he that dwells between the Cherubims shone forth, and we were saved. And may we not with Hope solicit the same Power and Mercy to save us again ; *That he who has delivered us from the Mouth of the Lion, and the Paw of the Bear, would rescue us also from this uncircumcised Philistin ?*

5thly, *We may be encourag'd in speaking good for our Lands before the Lord, because we may hope there are great Numbers in them that are living Members of the mystial Body of Christ.* Justice and Charity oblige us to believe, there are many that come under this happy Character in the establish'd Church, as well as among those of our Persuasion.

Now, these are they whom the great Redeemer loved, for whom he died, for whose Sakes primarily he has set up Ordinances in his Church, and upholds the Government of the World. When they are all called and gathered, the Mystery of God will be finished : He will then unhinge this vast Fabrick of the World, and introduce another Scene. But while there is a considerable Number of them among a professing People, he will not forsake them ; (a) The

(a) Isa. 6. 13.

Gates of Hell (tho' they be moved) shall not prevail against them : They are the Substance of a Land ; on their Account we may plead a lively Hope for this too barren Vine, (a) *Destroy it not, for a Blessing is in it.* 6thly, *We may be encourag'd to speak good for these Lands before God, by considering how far his own Glory is interested in the Matter.* Reformation from Popery was his signal Work, and we may hope it will be his Care. In that Mystery of Iniquity his Honour is given to Creatures, and his Praise to graven Images : By that great Apostacy a Cloud was brought over the Glory of the Christian Religion, and a Stumbling-Block laid in the Way of the Blind ; and after he has dispelled those thick Clouds of Darknes and Error, would it be for his Honour to suffer them to return and prevail, and continue to hang over the Face of the Christian World ? May we not plead with the Prophet, (b) *Do not abhor us for thy Name sake, do not disgrace the Throne of thy Glory, Remember, break not thy Covenant with us.* Certainly we may hope, and should pray, that tho' the Reformed Interest may be oppressed, it shall not be over-whelm'd and lost : Tho' it may be cast again into the Fire, 'tis with a Design of making it run together, and that it may be brought forth brighter and better, and be the Seed of that Peace and Glory that are promised for the latter Days. By these and the like Considerations, we should be encouraged to speak Good for our *Israel* before the Lord.

2dly, Let us not only speak Good for our Lands, but contribute all that is in our Power towards turning away *Wrath*. I shall very briefly mention two Instances wherein we may be serviceable this way, and conclude.

1. By becoming more exemplary and zealous in personal and Family Reformation.

(a) Isa. 65. 8.

(b) Jer. 14. 21.

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My Brethren, The Decay of serious practical Religion among us is deplorable. Are there not with us, even with us, Sins against the Lord our God? Can we say, Surely because I am innocent, his Anger shall turn away from me? Alas! we cannot: Our own Consciences may be Witnesses against us in many Instances. We have not kept our Garments undefiled, but are deep Sharers in the common Guilt. Let us consider our Ways, and *Remember whence we are fallen, and repent, and do our first Works*. If more ingenuous Motives do not prevail, let the Fear of a decreed Destruction awaken us, and make us better in Heart and Life toward God and Men. Let us labour to be more unblameable in our Conversation, and more exemplary in our Families. Where we fix our Tent, let God have his Altar; since he condescends to stile himself the God of the Families of *Israel*, how justly may He expect to be acknowledged and worshipped in them? In short, whatever others do in a vicious Age, let it be our Purpose and serious Endeavour, that *we and our Houses will serve the Lord*.

If many among us were zealous in this Work, they may be instrumental to bring down a Blessing upon the rest. An indulgent God may set them in the Ballance against a degenerate Multitude, and for their Sakes spare the Lands.

2. *By a resolved Adherence to the publick Protestant Interest under all our Discouragement*. Let unshaken Loyalty to our Protestant QUEEN, and a regular Zeal for the Protestant Succession, govern every Step of our Way; that if ever there should be a Struggle, we may cordially and unanimously unite with, and strengthen those that stand up for the Defence thereof.

Let none peevishly object, Why should we contribute to keep Power in their Hands, who make use of it to crush and ruin us? A generous Regard to the Publick Good should banish such a Thought. Zeal for God, Sense of Duty, and Abhorrence of

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Popery, should command us thro' greater Difficulties. This is our Duty, and in Attendance on it, God will be pleased with us. Yea, and *when a Man's Ways please the Lord, he can make his very Enemies to be at peace with him.* He can melt the Hearts of our Brethren into a due Temper towards us, and send forth an healing, uniting Spirit of Love.

However, If the Will of God be so, that for a Trial of our Fidelity poor *Dissenters* must be still exposed and pursued, I could not wish for them, that they might suffer with a brighter Character than this, that under disobliging Methods of Unkindness and Severity, and under Circumstances of Self-denial, they may with a noble disinterested Zeal stand firm and immoveable for the Protestant Interest and Cause. May they herein out-do those that may promise themselves the greatest temporal Advantages by it. This, my Brethren, will command an honourable Testimony for them in the Conscience of others, and lay the Foundation of a comfortable one in their own. And if they be sincere, whatever their Treatment may be on Earth, great will be their Reward in Heaven. After they have been *faithful in following the Lamb where-soever he goes*, they shall have their *Palms and Crowns* in that better World, *where the Wicked cease from troubling, and the Weary are at Rest.*



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